

With so many pressing challenges before us as a nation - economic uncertainty brought on by a crushing federal debt, violent unrest in the Middle East, and spiking energy prices - it is important that we pause regularly to appreciate the good things close to us, like family and community.

Part of my work in Nebraska includes interacting with young people in their schools and classrooms. I have addressed students at several elementary and high schools throughout the First Congressional District over recent years. Earlier this week I had the pleasure of talking with students at Pender High School and Walthill Public Schools.

The children at both schools, who are learning in the classroom about the various levels and workings of government, asked insightful questions about how the governing process is intended to protect our rights as Americans. As is often the case, our discussions shed light on the critical importance of understanding and participating in civil society. I often share my own interest in politics and government at a young age, telling the story of writing a letter as a fifth-grader to President Nixon, asking him about his trip to China.

At Pender High School, I spoke to the government class of instructor Mr. Lonnie Ford, whose son, Army Sergeant Joshua Ford, died serving his country in combat operations in Iraq in 2006. In the process of mourning the loss of his son, Lonnie has devoted much of his time to helping other families who have lost loved ones during military service. In addition to being a great educator, he provides a wonderful example of compassion and selflessness to his students.



*Speaking to students at Walthill Public Schools*